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DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT SCHOOL



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PROGRAM MANAGEMENT COURSE INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROGRAM

AF PROGRAM MANAGERS VIEW
PROMOTION, ADVOCACY AND SECOND TOURS

STUDY PROJECT REPORT
PMC 75-2

Leo Johnson
MAJOR USAF

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DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

STUDY TITLE:

AF PROGRAM MANAGERS VIEW
PROMOTION, ADVOCACY AND SECOND TOURS

STUDY PROJECT GOALS *were as follows: --*

To determine how past Program Managers view ambiguity in stated policy in three areas, program advocacy, second tours as a PM and promotion opportunity for PM's; *and*

To analyze the three areas of consideration and make recommendations that might facilitate resolution of the perceived ambiguity.

STUDY REPORT ABSTRACT

This project is designed to follow Program Management, A Viable Air Force Career?, by Major Robert Elliott, PMC 74-2. That project was devoted to understanding how AF Program Managers perceive their job in general terms. Based on that report and a questionnaire I mailed to sixty-six AF Program Managers, I examined the hypotheses that:

A PM should be an earnest program advocate

PM's would readily seek out subsequent tours as Program Managers

PM's are satisfied with promotion opportunity to O7 in their career field

I concluded that:

Program advocacy is an inherent part of the PM's job

PM's would not like an assignment policy that routinely retained an officer in the PM role for more than one tour

PM's should be retained in the acquisition career field in some capacity if not as PM's.

PM's do not feel promotions are directly related to the worth of the management job they do.

I have made recommendations in the areas of advocacy and PM promotion that might be useful for AFSC DCS/Personnel and other managers of PM's to consider.

KEY WORDS

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT CAREER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM MANAGEMENT DELPHI TECHNIQUE

NAME, RANK, SERVICE

Leo Johnson, Major, USAF

CLASS

PMC 75-2

DATE

November 1975

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**AF PROGRAM MANAGERS VIEW
PROMOTION, ADVOCACY AND SECOND TOURS**

**Study Project Report
Individual Study Program
Defense Systems Management School
Program Management Course
Class 75-2**

by

**Leo Johnson
MAJOR USAF**

November 1975

**Study Project Advisor
Major Don Fujii**

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This study project report represents the views, conclusions and recommendations of the author and does not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Defense Systems Management School or the Department of Defense.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this project was to determine why PM's perceive ambiguity in three specific areas of Program Management and to make recommendations for resolving such conflict.

Based on split responses by PM's to questions in previous studies in the areas of program advocacy, repeat tours as PM's and promotion opportunity, I concluded that ambiguity existed in perception of policy if not in fact. Either way it is dysfunctional and should be resolved.

As a basis of informed opinion I used a questionnaire keyed to the three areas which I mailed to sixty-six AF Program Managers. Thirty-seven (56%) responded. I analyzed their responses, drew conclusions and generated a number of recommendations in the areas of consideration as well as related personnel policy areas.

The major conclusions are:

1. Program advocacy is an inherent part of the PM's job.
2. PM's would not welcome an assignment policy routinely retaining an officer in the PM role for more than one tour.
3. PM's should be retained in the acquisition career field in some capacity if not as PM's.
4. PM's do not feel promotions are directly related to the management job they do.
5. Challenges of the PM job will continue to attract good people.

Recommendations:

1. Program Managers should be told unequivocally they must act as advocates.
2. PM's should be encouraged to make maximum use of HQ USAF advocates.
3. AFSC should make a concerted effort to get their good young officers

assigned to PEM and SYSTO positions.

4. AFSC should espouse a policy that rewards the PM who does a good management job and demotes the PM who mismanages.

5. An effort should be made to educate senior officer throughout the AF about the PM position and responsibility.

These findings are based on the attitudes and opinions of a highly qualified sample so should be useful to personnel managers in the Air Force Systems Command when considering change to the Program Manager career field.

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY PROJECT

The overall purpose of this project was twofold. First, I wanted to determine how the Program Manager reacted to ambiguity in stated policy in three areas, program advocacy, second tours as a PM and promotion opportunity for PM's.

I was interested to learn how these areas were perceived in the real world because all three were presented in the Defense Systems Management School in very equivocal terms.

Second, my project was a follow-up to one done by Major Robert B. Elliott, DSMS 74-2. My intention was to tap a source of informed opinion and maintain a continuing dialogue with a group of active duty and retired Program Managers provided by the DCS/Personnel, HQ AFSC. Any useful information generated by my project will be provided to that office.

SPECIFIC GOALS OF THE PROJECT

Based on analysis of Major Elliott's project, I generated a hypothesis for each of the three areas outlined above.

My first hypothesis was that the PM can and should be an earnest program advocate.

Second, I posed the hypothesis that PM's would readily seek out subsequent tours as Program Managers.

Last, I wanted to test the hypothesis that PM's are not dissatisfied with the numbers of promotions to 07 available in their career field, rather they feel the available promotions do not go to the Program Managers who do the best job.

LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

The data collected by questionnaire had two serious shortcomings. One is related to the retired PM sample and the other is related to the nature of the questionnaire.

First, because the Program Management career field has been so dynamic in recent years, several PM's who retired in the last five years were unfamiliar with some of the new program management terminology.

Second, I planned to use the Delphi technique to zero-in on specific areas, but because both surveys did not include identical respondents the technique was not appropriate.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into four major sections. The first section describes the data collection procedures and the methodology for data analysis.

The second section explains how the contents of this report are related to three major areas covered in Major Elliott's survey.

The third section contains the analysis of the responses to the questions related to each of the major subject areas, discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The last section presents a summary of the conclusions and the recommendations.

SECTION II

STUDY PROJECT METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study was collected through a questionnaire which was mailed to twenty-four active duty and forty-two retired Air Force Program Managers. This list of Program Managers was compiled by DCS/Personnel at Air Force Systems Command. The criteria for selecting officers for the mailing list was that they had completed at least one tour of duty as Program Manager of a major program. Their grades ranged from Colonel to General.

Thirty-seven or 56% of the sixty-six questionnaires were returned. Approximately 75% of the active duty PM's and 45% of the retired PM's responded.

To facilitate bias reduction the questionnaire and the administrative procedures for handling it ensured the anonymity of the respondents in both analysis and reporting.

The same questionnaire, consisting of thirteen philosophical style questions was used for both active duty and retired Program Managers. In order to make the questionnaire easy to complete and analyze and to maximize returns, the respondent was asked to circle one of five choices for each question. I did provide space for comments so there was opportunity for dialogue which was useful in ascertaining the why of minority views.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the responses to questions ten and eleven, I used the technique of rank coefficient employing both frequency of selection and weighting of the selection by the rank the respondent had assigned to it.

For question ten there was high positive agreement among the respondents as to actual relative ranking for their first two choices only. For question eleven there was high positive agreement among the top three choices.

The responses to the remainder of the questions were tabulated for agreement or disagreement only.

Where agreement was less than equivocal I attempted to explain the lack of agreement through use of the respondents' remarks or through observations made by Fox in Arming America or by LMI in a 1972 study of Program Management undertaken for the DOD.

SECTION III

ANALYSIS OF MAJOR ELLIOTT'S PAPER

To keep the scope of this project manageable, I concentrated my attention and my questionnaire in three major areas touched on by Major Elliott: The PM as program advocate, retention of successful PM's in the acquisition career field, and promotion opportunity for the PM.

In attempting to zero-in on answers to questions in these areas, I first examined four questions used by Major Elliott and the conclusions he drew from answers to his questionnaire.

THE PM AS PROGRAM ADVOCATE

Question 5. The role of advocate should not be played by the PM at all. It should be played by higher levels of command.

63% of the respondents felt the PM should not abdicate the role of advocate.

37% felt the role belongs to higher levels of command. Major Elliott concluded that the PM should share the role of advocate with higher levels of command. (1:17)

I draw the same conclusion to this question as did Major Elliott, but I feel there is some ambiguity in policy in this area and I wanted to examine further the reasons the PM supports advocacy and perhaps determine why 37% of the respondents did not support advocacy. I sought further explanation with questions two, six, seven and eight of the questionnaire at Appendix A, and through examination of AF Regulation 800-2.

RETENTION OF SUCCESSFUL PM'S IN THE ACQUISITION CAREER FIELD

Two of Major Elliott's questions appeared to me to bear on the attractiveness to the PM of follow-on or subsequent assignments to a Program Office.

Question 13. I would seek out Program Management as a subsequent assignment.

81% of the respondents answered in the affirmative and Major Elliott concluded, as do I from this question, that PM's would overwhelmingly opt to accept another job as PM. (1:22)

Question 2. The phase of the program (e.g., conceptual, validation, full-scale development, production) in which a PM serves greatly affects his chance for success.

88% of the respondents agreed with the statement but there was no clear agreement on which phase is most/least likely to aid PM personal success.

With only a statistical preponderance, Major Elliott could only draw the tentative conclusion that PM's felt FSD was most likely and the conceptual or production phase was least likely of success. (1:11)

I conclude from the responses to the question above only, that given a choice, the greatest percentage of the respondents would probably enter the acquisition cycle in the FSD phase.

With the current emphasis on extended tenure for PM's and the desire to retain good PM's in the acquisition career field, I thought it would be useful to determine if the PM would really like it if he were shifted from one program to another and which phase of a program he would most like to come into. I attempted to determine that with my questions numbered three and five.

PROMOTION OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PM

One of Major Elliott's key findings was the conclusion that PM's felt they were not rewarded (with promotions to General Officer) quite as well as their contemporaries in operations and if promotion opportunity does not improve for the career field, good PM's will leave the Air Force for industry jobs. (1:28)

Question 9. Considering the risk and personal challenge, I feel a PM is adequately rewarded in comparison to his contemporaries.

45% agreed. 51% disagreed. (1:19)

I did not draw the same conclusion to this response that Major Elliott did. I conclude that there is dissatisfaction with the promotion selection process and not with the strict ratio of promotions by career field. I attempted to further bound the reasons for dissatisfaction with my questions numbered one, four and nine and observations by the authors of my bibliography references two and three.

I suspect much of the dissatisfaction and frustration with the promotion process stems from the conflict of expectations generated by the policy stated in DODD 5000.23 and its implementing directives and the facts of real life. Two of those facts certainly are the rated/non-rated controversy and encroachment on the PM career field by favored officers from other career fields. Two of the comments made by Major Elliott's respondents are apropos to my observation:

"I think PM's who make general were selected as PM's so they could make general in AFSC. Program Management per se is not a criterion." (1:20)

"Promotion of PM's in military is based too much on politics and who one knows." (1:20)

SECTION IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

For my purpose of examining three specific facets of Program Management, the first nine of my questions are grouped with their related topics. The questions, tabulations of results and respondent's comments are presented under the three headings and each area is followed by a section containing analysis, conclusions and recommendations for each area.

The major topics covered and related questions are presented in the following order:

Role of the PM in program advocacy and questions two, six, seven and eight.

Second tours for the PM in a Program Office and related questions three and five.

Promotion opportunity for PM's at the 07 level together with questions one, four and nine.

The last four questions do not correlate to my primary purpose so they are treated separately. They do cover areas in which the informed opinion available from the respondents was desired. In addition to being of current general interest perhaps they could serve as a point of departure for possible future projects.

RESPONSE CODE FOR SINGLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

SA - Strongly Agree

MA - Mildly Agree

NO - No Opinion/Not Sure

MD - Mildly Disagree

SD - Strongly Disagree

THE ROLE OF PM AS PROGRAM ADVOCATE

Question 2. Exposure at MAJCOM and OSD levels is important to the personal success of the PM.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
81%	16%	3%		

"Vital! Not only personal success but more importantly program success."

"The Washington arena is different and important to the PM in shaping perspective."

"Strongly Agree if 'success' is measured in terms of promotion to General Officer. Commanders of MAJCOMs and above have the major voice in G.O. promotions."

"Not necessarily as a PM but in securing a follow-on assignment in which promotion is possible, if not achieved as a PM. As a PM such exposure can hurt you but seldom helps toward promotion - so it is important."

"The upper levels of a bureaucracy make inputs in many ways which can help or hurt personal success."

"But remember, exposure isn't by definition good - it's merely an opportunity."

"Exposure and personal contact are vital if you are going to make it. As we all know - it is not a process of selection - it is a process of eliminating many well qualified people."

I had expected this overwhelming (97%) agreement with this statement for two reasons. First, the need for visibility as a career enhancement opportunity is espoused by superiors throughout a military career and second, because in program management much of the defacto authority of individual PM's is based on alliances and inter-personal relationships.

Question 6. Prior to the production decision, the PM's time should be equally divided between PMO management tasks and efforts to obtain favorable DSARC decisions.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
6%	19%	31%	22%	22%

"Some such split is essential. I don't know that it's 50/50."

"He must divide time so that he succeeds with the program and DSARC. Whatever it takes."

"Conceptually, most of his time should be spent in program management. In the real world he must (unfortunately) devote a good bit of time to advocacy of this type."

"He should be involved in both but not equally."

"The PM needs more time to manage! DSARCS should be less proliferated and less traumatic."

"PMO management tasks are paramount. If done.....Certainly the OSD staff must be courted six weeks to one month prior to DSARC - but not require 50% of a PM's time and efforts."

Any conclusion reached about responses to this question is subject to two caveats. A significant number of the respondents who selected No Opinion/Not Sure were retired PM's who were unfamiliar with the relatively new advisory body to the SECDEF on the acquisition of major defense systems programs and its acronym, DSARC (Defense Systems Acquisition Review Council).

In addition, the word 'equally' caused the question to be confusing. Comments addressed to this question clearly indicate that most of the disagreement was with the exact amount of time the PM should devote to DSARC.

I'm unable to draw a statistically supportable conclusion to this query because it was a bad question. However, based on comments from over 50% of the respondents I am relatively certain they agree that the PM must dedicate some time to obtaining proper DSARC decisions.

Question 7. Considering current requirements to provide more and more detailed data to the highest levels, I feel other entities, i.e., PEM, SYSTO, user, etc., can adequately act as advocates to sell and defend the program.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
16%	31%	3%	25%	25%

COMMENTS SUPPORTING THE PM AS ADVOCATE

"The key word is 'adequately'. In some cases yes; in others no. Depends on the individual and his relationship with the SPD staff. By all means, the resources of the SPO should be called upon as necessary."

"Unfortunately, an inherent job of PM not a staff man at higher levels."

"I had more clout than the PEM and was considered 'the authority'. PEM was too busy fighting JCS/OSD/USAF political battles to effectively speak for the program."

"Just don't feel they're close enough to the program or could be well enough informed of details asked for to be able to sell and defend....."

"Overall yes - details of program no."

COMMENTS SUPPORTING OTHER ENTITIES AS PRIMARY ADVOCATES

"Every once in a while, though, you'd better bring the guy with the facts into the act."

"They can't do the job without the PM, but they can take much of the load off his shoulders."

"Should depend more on these Washington people. They are key and need to be top quality officers."

"But for proper interpretation of data, timeliness, and full knowledge no one should be able to equal the PM. Of four SYSTO's in four years on my last program, only one was competent."

"I feel the user and the PEM have always had this responsibility."

"The PM needs full time to manage his program."

Though there was no statistical preponderance either in agreement or disagreement with this statement, I feel justified in drawing a strong conclusion that most of the respondents believe the PM must act as the ultimate program advocate. 50% of the sample directly support that conclusion and a significant number of the 30% who mildly agreed that other parties should take as much of the advocacy role as possible did so with reservations. As a matter-of-fact, the comments of the two groups were very similar with regard to using external advocates to the maximum and calling on the PM when the expert was needed.

Question 8. The useful results obtained from briefings to MAJCOM adequately compensate for the time spent away from the Project Management Office.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
16%	28%	16%	25%	15%

COMMENTS IN AGREEMENT

"I think you can work it--pick a solid deputy and don't spend all your time on the road."

"Depends on the audience and the actual authority vested in the listeners."

"Varies with the program. Just keeping MAJCOM informed so they support the program is useful."

"MAJCOM staff unable to travel and exploit knowledge of entire staff at any given time. Exchange of info and the 'big picture' of PM's system in MAJCOM's plans extremely beneficial. PM should give same pitch as to AFSC/USAF/SAF to minimize time required."

COMMENTS IN DISAGREEMENT

"The briefings are important, but the time spent on them is fantastic."

"Useful results are few and far between."

"PAR's and CAR's OK. Too much briefing and meeting time.
Particularly for SPO middle management people."

"About half of them do."

The almost symmetrical distribution of the responses to this question with equal agreement and disagreement leads me to conclude that the last comment above is appropriate. Without basis in fact I suspect these results would be characteristic of routinely scheduled briefings.

ANALYSIS

My hypothesis when I began this project was that the Program Manager could and should be an earnest advocate for his program; to include use of good judgement in determining when to "sell" the program or to recommend cancellation.

Responses to Major Elliott's paper indicated that a majority of PM's felt they should be advocates and could recommend cancellation without career repercussions. (1:17)

I wanted to learn why PM's supported advocacy and more importantly, why a large minority questioned the role of PM as advocate.

Reasons for supporting advocacy by the PM were not difficult to find. Responses to my questionnaire indicated:

High level exposure is important to most PM's.

PM's feel they are the ultimate "expert" on their program.

It is the PM's job to devote some time to the DSARC process.

In addition, AF Regulation 800-2 provides that HQ USAF will conduct program advocacy and will assign the PM early to ".....allow the Program Manager to participate in program advocacy." (7:3)

These appear to be unequivocal reasons for the PM to embrace program advocacy but both Major Elliott's questionnaire and mine indicate reticence on the part of a significant number of PM's to do so.

I expected to find conflicting written policy but did not, however, I have heard OSD officials discourage advocacy and I researched two studies that address the question negatively.

J. Ronald Fox in Arming America raises the question whether or not the PM can maintain enough objectivity to recommend cancellation of a project for which he is also advocate. (2:180)

The Logistics Management Institute in a 1972 report for the government observed:

Some PM's spend considerable time and effort preparing for and testifying at Congressional hearings. We believe it is quite appropriate to involve the PM in such matters when they are concerned with management, as opposed to defense of the program. It is our opinion, however, that PM's should be allowed maximum time to manage their program and that their military and civilian superiors should assume the role of program advocate at higher levels of authority and before Congressional Committees.

These probably are sufficient explanation for the minority view.

My conclusion is that program advocacy is indeed an inherent part of the PM's job. Personal objectivity must depend on the individual PM's capabilities.

The following recommendations resulted from this analysis:

1. Program Managers should be told unequivocally they must be program advocates.
2. PM's should be encouraged to make maximum use of HQ USAF advocates.
3. Only very highly qualified officers should be assigned to PEM and SYSTO positions. AFSC should make a concerted effort to get their good young officers into these areas.
4. MAJCOM routinely scheduled briefings should be continually screened for usefulness (Purpose, decision-maker attendance, etc.).

SECOND TOURS AS A PM

Question 3. Successful Program Managers should be retained in the acquisition career field - preferably to apply their expertise to subsequent PM positions.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
31%	50%	3%	13%	3%

"Only if clear cut career advancement is made possible."

"Should be rotated out very selectively for career broadening - operational and HQ USAF key positions."

"Not only as subsequent PM positions but as Division Commander and Deputy."

"Successful managers of smaller programs should be retained and given larger programs. However, PM's are also qualified for most any staff job and their experience there is important also."

"Yes, but they should have occasional short operational tours. They need to see how the rest of the AF lives."

"Up to a point - then the best have to become 'managers' of PM's."

"More so than in most other AF jobs, experience is of vital importance."

"Not that many around in G.O. ranks."

I conclude from responses to this question that PM's would welcome retention in the career field. From the remarks, however, it is apparent that most do not advocate consecutive tours as a PM on other than an exceptional basis. Even those who disagreed with the blanket statement as posed agreed that PM experience should be used in areas peripheral to program acquisition.

Question 5. The early phases of a program (conceptual and validation) are the most critical and demanding.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
12%	25%	13%	25%	25%

If you agree, do you feel the PM for this period receives more credit or less credit for a successful program than his successors?

One-half of the respondents addressed the question regarding credit for a successful program and 80% of them felt the initial PM received less credit than the PM's for mature phases.

"Conceptual and validation phases are often completed with limited funding, unlimited time, contractor assistance in advocacy/selling. Adjusting to changes in schedule, cost, performance during FSD much more demanding."

"It seemed to me the early phases were OSD/USAF political maneuvering with think tank studies having the greatest influence; PM role minimal."

"All phases are critical and demanding. They may require different types of PM's."

"FSD is by far the most demanding and probably most critical from standpoint of commitment of resources, both OSD and contractors. (Money, manpower, material). Too many programs in conceptual phase are 'trial balloons.'"

"Less credit by far - all the hangers-on and helpers show up as the program matures and when the headcount and dollar volume get big enough, an 'operational' or other 'in' guy will get moved in just because it's big."

"The cost, schedule, performance triangle as a measure of PM effectiveness (subjective as it may be in the minds of supervisors) is not as operative as it is in the full scale development phase."

Statistically, only a simple majority felt that the more mature phases of a program were most important. Of much more significance to me is the perception that the initial PM's receive far less credit for their contribution to a successful program than do their successors.

My purpose in this area was to determine the attitude of PM's with respect to second tours as a PM if that should be the result of the evolving assignment process.

In recent years numerous studies have been performed and recommendations made to the services concerning the cost and lack of efficiency resulting from too rapid turnover/rotation of personnel.

Rotation has a number of desirable aspects, particularly as a means of developing officers for broad executive responsibility, but the hidden costs of continual loss of management expertise may be excessive in our current environment.

Fox indicates that turnover in the system acquisition career field causes particularly acute problems. (2:183)

The Air Force recognized this a number of years ago and now makes a concentrated effort to put PM's on extended tours in the Program Office. LMI found in 1972 that, "The military services have made measurable progress in lengthening and stabilizing tenure of PM's over the past five years. (3:19)

I had concluded as a result of response to Major Elliott's paper that successful PM's would seek out a Program Manager position again and would most likely opt for the Full Scale Development phase of a large system.

I conclude, however, from responses to my questions that PM's would not welcome an assignment policy that attempted to routinely retain an officer in the PM role for more than one tour.

Other conclusions are:

That PM's felt that a successful PM would seek a subsequent PM job if it meant moving to a bigger program.

PM's felt they should be retained in the acquisition career field in some capacity.

And that PM's, if given a choice, would choose to enter an on-going program in the Full Scale Development phase because they perceive it to be most rewarding.

I have no recommendations concerning this area. I think the AFSC career progression/assignment policy adequately accomodates the PM.

PROMOTION OPPORTUNITY TO O7 FOR PM'S

Question 1. Major Elliott concluded from the response to his question number nine that Program Managers do not feel they are equally competitive with operational types for O7. I agree and feel that action should be taken to increase the PM's promotional opportunity to O7.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
38%	34%	6%	19%	3%

"Either comply with the fine words so frequently uttered like 'rewards commensurate with responsibility and performance' or stop saying them."

"It depends on the size of your program. Certainly the B-1 program is competitive but a lesser program would not be."

"MA since with the drawdown in funding, I'm not sure that AFSC has programs of sufficient stature to warrant more than about 5 or 6 more General Officers."

"I do not agree with basic assumption. I feel PM's have equal promotional opportunities if their program is big enough. If it is not, they have to have additional qualifications."

"Until emphasis is evident within AFSC and AFLC it is unreasonable to expect other commands to relinquish their established position. Competition is with research-technical-staff types in AFSC."

"PM's should be rated directly by a General Officer. Evaluation by a Colonel only slightly senior and an actual rival for promotion is an unjust aggravation and the main restriction on promotion in my experience."

"The position and scope of responsibility of the PM is not understood by the senior officers throughout the AF as is that of the Wing CMD, for example. The position of PM needs to be given status throughout the AF and DOD."

I was able to conclude from response to this question that PM's feel strongly that some action should be taken to increase the promotional opportunity to O7 for the career field though there was still no clear cut majority who felt the PM was not 'equally competitive!' I get the distinct impression from the tenor of their remarks that they truly feel the PM management responsibilities are deserving of higher reward or more promotions by ratio than other career fields.

Question 4. Given that promotional opportunity in the PM career area remains unchanged, I believe the personal challenge of the job will continue to attract the best managers.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
47%	38%	6%	9%	0

"I think the promotional opportunities are good and attract as many as the personal challenge."

"The challenge of the job is tremendous to the better managers but the caste system will encourage the best to go with a job of greater promotion potential."

"After all it is the top prestige job in the R & D/Systems Acquisition field. It is unlikely to attract men from outside the field."

"No question that there is a challenge - but the needs of strong managers include growth and increased responsibility - he will seek it in or out of the service."

"It is the best job in the Air Force."

There is strong agreement that the job will continue to attract good people and further that the best managers must be adequately rewarded or they will not stay in this field.

Question 9. A Program Manager should not have to demonstrate command capabilities in another career area to be considered qualified for promotion to 07.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
53%	19%	6%	6%	16%

"There are too few responsible command jobs in the USAF to require this as a criterion. We make a mistake in applying it in other areas, e.g., Wing Commander in a tactical organization. Surely, leadership and the ability to work with people is very important, but the same leadership that works for a Wing Commander works in a Program Office. We are kidding ourselves that 'command' is a province of the tactical units alone."

SD "with very few exceptions."

"This is a marginal MA. I would want to see the broad management capability in senior officers. However, the role of a PM is demanding and well deserving of promotion without regard to experience in other commands."

"There are very few positions available for just PM's. I think it is important that 07's be able to accept a variety of tasks - not just PM jobs."

"It depends on the size of the P.O. He should demonstrate command capability of a large organization."

"Obviously it would be desirable, but not necessary. What command capabilities are required that are not required of a successful PM?"

"There are many, many possibilities in this career area so command should not have to be demonstrated in another area. However, I believe time should be spent in an operational command in one's career, but not necessarily as a senior officer."

There is substantial general agreement with the proposition that a PM could qualify for O7 without 'command' experience but most agreements are caveated, usually with a remark about the size of the Program Office being a criterion.

ANALYSIS

In this section, I wanted to test the hypothesis that PM's feel their chances of promotion are actually as good as those of officers in other career fields.

I started with the baseline set by Major Elliott's questionnaire wherein 45% of the respondents indicated they considered themselves adequately rewarded in relation to operational types and 51% disagreed.

I did not conclude as did Major Elliott that PM's felt they were not rewarded as well as contemporaries and would leave the military for that reason.

I drew the conclusion that some factor other than inequality of promotion ratios by career field was responsible for the near-equal split on agreement/disagreement.

I suspect there is continuing frustration with a system that promises much and delivers anything less. There are a number of policies that lead one to believe that Program Management is one of the best career fields to make General in. If this is not so, frustration results.

DODD 5000.23 states: "Career opportunities shall be established to attract, develop and reward outstanding military officers....." (5:2)

Further it states: "Opportunities for advancement should be equivalent with those of contemporaries in operational, line and command positions."

In addition, over the past ten years there have been continuing efforts to increase the authority of Project Offices by assigning higher ranking officers as PM's or by placing the P.O. higher in the chain of command.

In response to DODD 5000.1, LMI indicated in 1972 that there had been significant upgrading of the rank of PM's over the past three years with 88% of PM's assigned to AFSC in the grade of Colonel or above. (3:17)

The same LMI report recommended that the military departments continue to upgrade the rank of their PM's with special emphasis upon assigning General/Flag Officers to manage their most significant programs. (3:19)

As these policies are carried out, it is evident that promotions, per se, are available in the PM career field in a fair share.

Considering stated policy and the equality of promotion ratios between career fields, I conclude that the PM's who perceived they were inadequately rewarded relative to their operational counterparts were dissatisfied with the subjectiveness with which the promotions available are distributed.

This was the conclusion reached by Fox in Arming America. His interviewees felt that promotions were awarded for other than effectiveness or efficiency of program management techniques. Reasons given to the interviewees for their passovers for promotion included: "...they had not been to Vietnam, they had not been to a senior service school or they did not have command experience in field operational units." (2:197). He also states, "Although senior Pentagon officials have stated that experience in procurement and program management would be major factors in promotions, there has yet to be enough concrete evidence to convince career officers of the sincerity of these pronouncements." (2:197)

Responses to my questionnaire reinforce the findings above. The PM's queried felt some action should be taken to increase the PM's chance for promotion. Education/informing the top AF managers about Program Management responsibility was a recurring suggestion.

A 72% majority felt the PM need not have had "command" experience to be deserving of promotion to O7 but this too was caveated by a general feeling that only a very exceptional individual who exhibited broad management capability on a big program would be considered competitive.

85% of the respondents indicated they felt the PM career field will continue to attract good people even if the promotion picture remains unchanged. They did make the limiting statement that the best will not stick around if not rewarded at the higher grades.

This last appears to me to be a universal truth. In any undertaking, at the apex the selection out process will choose some of the best but more

will be rejected; to do whatever they will. I can understand the experience as a PM gives those not selected for promotion an option with industry that most operational types would not have, but in no career field do all those who are fully qualified receive promotions.

Only when the best Program Managers are passed over in preference for a less qualified officer from another area, usually operations, do I see real harm in the promotion process.

It is obvious from comments to questions throughout the questionnaire that this has occurred frequently in the past. The following comment is especially illustrative:

"Being an SPD is the best job I have ever had; most knowledgeable people see it the same way. But in my opinion the promotion prospects do not come from the job. Rather AFSC puts General Officer potentials into SPD jobs to get them promoted for services rendered elsewhere in their careers. Witness Nelson (B-1), McMullen (A-10), and Skantz (SRAM). Officers actually doing the foundational management effort (Cols Hippert, Hildebrandt and Falk) were eased out so the others could be promoted."

CONCLUSIONS

1. PM's do not feel promotions are directly related to the management job they do.
2. PM's need not demonstrate 'command' to be competitive to O7 but they must manage a large organization.
3. Challenges of the PM job will continue to attract good people.
4. PM's not selected for promotion will probably not elect to remain in the career field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. AFSC should consciously support a policy that rewards the PM who does a good management job and demotes the PM who mismanages.
2. A new effort should be launched to educate senior officers throughout the AF about the PM position and responsibility.
3. Consideration should be given to having General Officers write all Colonel PM OER's.

SUCCESS INDICATIONS

Questions ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen have no correlation to the three areas of prime concern in this paper so they are treated here separate and apart from the main body of conclusions. They cover two areas in which the respondents' informed opinion was desired.

Questions ten and eleven attempt to determine how the PM knows he is succeeding in the eyes of his boss.

Questions twelve and thirteen solicit opinions on the recently implemented AF Officers' Effectiveness Report. Views of two facets, the quota feature (22% top block, 28% second block and 50% third block or below) and the extension of a closed rating form to the grade of Lt. Col., were requested.

Question 10. Please rank the following list of indications to the PM that he is succeeding in the eyes of his boss using #1 for the earliest perceived indication and #5 for the most untimely.

5 OER

1 More latitude in decision making

2 Less reporting required

3 Personal praise

4 Program is "showcased"

Which is the truest indication?

50% - OER and 50% - Latitude in decision making.

Question 11. Please rank the following list of indications to the PM that he is not succeeding in the eyes of his boss using #1 for the earliest perceived indication and #5 for the most untimely.

4 OER

2 More Reporting Required

3 Restricted latitude in decision making

5 Visits by the IG Team

1 Direct Communication from the Boss

CONCLUSIONS

There was significant agreement that how much latitude in decision making a PM has and how much reporting is required give the PM some indication of his relative success in relation to his Boss' expectations. The same indicators are important in knowing when things are perceived in a negative light by the Boss but direct communication from the Boss becomes the number one indicator for the non-success.

RECOMMENDATION

The PM and his Boss should have constant dialogue - both positive and negative. There should be no question for either the PM or the Boss about the Boss' perceptions of the PM's performance.

COMMENTS ON THE NEW AF OFFICER OER

These two questions were included primarily to determine how Program Managers perceived the effect of the two major facets of the new OER system on the personnel in the Program Office.

Generally, the opinions of the PM's track with what has been observed about the quota system since its institution.

There is concensus that imposing quotas on the selected-out population found in a SPO is not equitable.

There is also agreement that a quota system is necessary to reduce inflation of OER indexes.

Question 12. The imposition of quotas on each rating category is an excellent feature of the new AF Officer Effectiveness Report system.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
16%	28%	31%	6%	19%

There are three comments I think should be of specific interest to AFSC personnel managers:

"In the one partial cycle I have seen on the new system I see a very unbecoming series of weaknesses. First, there is blatant collusion going on as units rate their people within the 22-28-50 brackets. Second, there is inequity being induced by rank privileges, e.g., separate SPO's with General Officer SPD's are not following ground rules passed to lesser units. Third, I see myself ordering (for example) 'a 34 percentile procurement guy;' I can't afford any more GOOD guys."

Question 13. Extension of the closed evaluation form to Lt. Colonels is a viable and desirable feature of the new OER system.

SA	MA	NO	MD	SD
28%	25%	31%	6%	10%

If you agree with this statement, would you recommend its extension to all field grade officers? YES/NO

77% Yes - 23% No

The respondents overwhelmingly advocate use of the closed promotion potential evaluation and would extend its use at least to the Major level.

One comment well worth considering in any move to extend the application of the closed report is:

"Would not extend below L/C - must give others a better idea re staying in or getting out!"

SECTION V

SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. Program Advocacy is an inherent part of the PM's job.
2. PM's would not welcome an assignment policy routinely retaining an officer in the PM role for more than one tour.
3. Successful PM's would seek subsequent PM jobs if they could move to a bigger program.
4. PM's should be retained in the acquisition career field in some capacity if not as PM's.
5. PM's do not feel promotions are directly related to the management job they do.
6. PM's need not demonstrate 'command' to be competitive to O7 but they must manage a large organization.
7. Challenges of the PM job will continue to attract good people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Program Managers should be told unequivocally they must be program advocates.
2. PM's should be encouraged to make maximum use of HQ USAF advocates.
3. Only very highly qualified officers should be assigned to PEM and SYSTO positions. AFSC should make a concerted effort to get their good young officers into these areas.
4. MAJCOM routinely scheduled briefings should be continuously screened for usefulness. (Purpose, decision-maker attendance, etc.).

5. AFSC should consciously support a policy that rewards the PM who does a good management job and demotes the PM who mismanages.
6. A new effort should be launched to educate senior officers throughout the AF about the PM position and responsibility.
7. Consideration should be given to having General Officers write all Colonel PM OER's.
8. The PM and his Boss should have constant dialogue - both positive and negative. There should be no question for either the PM or the Boss about the Boss' perceptions of the PM's performance.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE SYSTEMS COMMAND
ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, DC 20334



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: DP

SEP 16 1975

SUBJECT: System Acquisition Management Careers

TO: Present or Former Program Managers

1. In September and October, 1974, we assisted Major Robert Elliott, a student at the Defense Systems Management School (DSMS) in a questionnaire-based study project by sending his questionnaire to over 50 present and former Program Managers. The results of that study, aimed at gaining an understanding of how Air Force Program Managers perceive themselves and their jobs, were considered in AFSC efforts on PROJECT VECTOR and other personnel policy-making activities.
2. We wish to thank those of you who participated for a most useful and encouraging response to Major Elliott's project and to request your participation in an extension of that project. We have proposed to the DSMS the resource of experienced Program Managers who responded to Major Elliott, and others who might be added, be considered a continuing source of informed opinion who would respond to a few appropriate and carefully designed questionnaire-based projects.
3. Major Leo Johnson, currently an Air Force student at DSMS, has agreed to take the next step in establishing a continuing dialogue with you. He is forwarding to you a copy of Major Elliott's report and a questionnaire requesting comments on the report and answers to additional questions. Using the Delphi technique, he expects to zero-in on answers to some very subjective questions concerning "success" and promotions in particular. The value of this survey is dependent upon a very candid response based on your careful consideration of each question.
4. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to Major Johnson by 10 October in the enclosed envelope. Please note that the return envelope is addressed to Major Johnson at DSMS. Again, you may be absolutely assured that your response will be treated confidentially. Although survey results will be made available to us, the raw data will not be available to us or HQ USAF.
5. Major Johnson's report will be provided to you in December. At that time we invite you to respond directly to DSMS on whether this project should be continued, discontinued or reoriented.
6. If you have any questions about the questionnaire, Major Johnson can be reached at DSMS, Fort Belvoir, VA, commercial number (703) 664-6796 or AUTOVON 354-6796. This number is in operation at all times.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "COLA R. MORRIS, JR.", is located above the typed name.

COLA R. MORRIS, JR., Colonel, USAF
Asst DCS/Personnel

- 2 Atch
1. Questionnaire
2. Report

Questionnaire

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following questions?
Please circle one of the response codes.

Response Code SA - Strongly Agree
 MA - Mildly Agree
 NO - No Opinion/Not Sure
 MD - Mildly Disagree
 SD - Strongly Disagree

1. Major Elliot concluded from the response to his question number nine that Program Managers do not feel they are equally competitive with operational types for 07. I agree and feel that action should be taken to increase the PM's promotional opportunity to 07.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

2. Exposure at MAJCOM and OSD levels is important to the personal success of the PM.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

3. Successful Program Managers should be retained in the acquisition career field - preferably to apply their expertise to subsequent PM positions.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

4. Given that promotional opportunity in the PM career area remains unchanged, I believe the personal challenge of the job will continue to attract the best managers.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

5. The early phases of a program (conceptual and validation) are the most critical and demanding.

SA MA NO MD SD

If you agree, do you feel the PM for this period receives more credit or less credit for a successful program than do his successors?

COMMENTS:

6. Prior to the production decision, the PM's time should be equally divided between PMO management tasks and efforts to obtain favorable DSARC decisions.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

7. Considering current requirements to provide more and more detailed data to the highest levels, I feel other entities, i.e., PEM, SYSTO, user, etc., can adequately act as advocates to sell and defend the program.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

8. The useful results obtained from briefings to MAJCOM adequately compensate for the time spent away from the Project Management Office.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

9. A Program Manager should not have to demonstrate command capabilities in another career area to be considered qualified for promotion to O7.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

10. Please rank the following list of indications to the PM that he is succeeding in the eyes of his boss using #1 for the earliest perceived indication and #5 for the most untimely.

___ OER

___ More latitude in decision making

___ Less reporting required

___ Personal praise

___ Program is "showcased"

Which is the truest indicator?

COMMENTS:

11. Please rank the following list of indications to the PM that he is not succeeding in the eyes of his boss using #1 for the earliest perceived indication and #5 for the most untimely.

___ OER

___ More reporting required

___ Restricted latitude in decision making

___ Visits by the IG Team

___ Direct communication from the boss

COMMENTS:

12. The imposition of quotas on each rating category is an excellent feature of the new AF Officer Effectiveness Report System.

SA MA NO MD SD

COMMENTS:

13. Extension of the closed evaluation form to Lt Colonels is a viable and desirable feature of the new OER system.

SA MA NO MD SD

If you agree with this statement, would you recommend its extension to all field grade officers? Yes/No

COMMENTS:

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